

A Vibrant Café in Exeter

Jennifer Desrosiers of Laney & Lu has a story to tell.

How does an experienced architectural engineer with more than 15 years of experience in manufacturing end up owning a specialty restaurant in a small New England town?

Jennifer Desrosiers was on her planned career path, however something was still missing. In 2012, during a period of uncertainty she embarked on a journey of health and wellness and began to focus on the less tangible elements of her life. She consulted with guides who introduced her to the Paleo diet along with meditation to still the mind and exercises to extend the body with yoga. It made a change in her life that was very significant and one she wanted to share and encourage others to experience.

While maintaining her position in manufacturing, she expanded her nutrition knowledge and became certified as a health coach and yoga instructor. This led to the founding of Wild Adventurous Life which is described as a 'wellness and lifestyle media company born from our love of coloring outside the lines, breaking the mold and skiing out of bounds'. She continued to expand her plans and heightened passion for health and balanced pleasures into a sustainable business.

In 2015 building on her clients from Wild Adventurous Life, Jennifer and her husband Roger set their sights on finding a place to start a small restaurant in Exeter, NH. Their goal was to provide high quality, locally sourced and healthy vegetarian food complementing and completing the nourishment of mind and body. She found a spot that spoke to her architectural eye, a former restaurant that had limited seating but character she could work with. There was one major drawback though; it was a rear access facility with no frontage on the town's main street.

As she planned the financial aspects of the restaurant with the mindset of an engineer, she remembered meeting Warren Daniel, Regional Director of the NH Small Business Development Center several years earlier. She contacted Warren who has an extensive background in the food service industry. Shortly

after they met, Warren confronted the elephant in the room – a restaurant with no frontage on the busiest street in town. “Working with Warren was just what we needed before opening Laney & Lu’s. His knowledge of the industry saved us from countless early mistakes and helped us make it through the first years with a strong foundation,” stated Jennifer.

Soon renovation was underway and Laney & Lu was being re-constructed into the cheerful warm and welcoming eatery that it is today. She and Warren met frequently to develop positive metrics for success. As Warren Daniel describes, “Jennifer has a wealth of positive energy and a solid network of professionals she can engage with. More importantly she has a tremendous dedication to learning and the good sense to use consultants when and where appropriate.”

As Laney & Lu’s opening approached, Jennifer engaged the community with dynamic social media content that helped build excitement about the innovative food and customer experience that they would be offering.

Now just 3 years after opening, Laney & Lu employs 20 staff members who share a common vision of health and wellness through positive relationships with food and others. The restaurant itself is a welcoming and upbeat facility that has the feel of a hidden secret where you can get your day off to a great start or rejuvenate after a less than perfect workday.

Consistent with the quality of the restaurant’s locally sourced foods, is Jennifer’s commitment to the development of staff as valuable partners in presenting a creative and positive experience for their customers. Whether it is a high school student who is hired and trained as a “Dish Boss” or their “Soul Servers” and “Chief Happiness Officer,” all employees are trained as they engage with customers.

Jennifer states that “as they grow together, challenge and support each other they add positive value to each interaction” she added “I can teach anyone to make a smoothie but to have it be done with an extra level of care is part of what sets us apart.”

Word of Laney & Lu spread quickly through recognition from New Hampshire Magazine, NH Chronicle, Yankee Magazine, numerous restaurant reviewers and social media. When asked about expansion plans, Jennifer alludes to possibilities but knows that any such opportunities will be reviewed again with her NH Small Business Development Center advisor Warren Daniel.

Greta Johansson, District Director of the Small Business Administration commented, "Restaurants like Laney & Lu are positive examples of the importance of small businesses in a community like Exeter.

Jennifer Desrosiers' leadership and vision created Laney & Lu which is now a vibrant hive to a growing clientele. We are so pleased that she was able to connect with Warren Daniel of the NH SBDC and benefit from his vast experience in the restaurant industry."

For additional information about the NH Small Business Development Center and the SBA in New Hampshire visit www.nhsbdc.org and www.sba.gov/nh.

For additional Information on Jennifer Desrosiers and Laney & Lu's visit www.Laneyandlu.com